

Colombia

Facts and Statistics

Location: Northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Panama and Venezuela, and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Ecuador and Panama

Capital: Bogota

Population: 42,954,279 (July 2005 est.)

Ethnic Groups: mestizo 58%, white 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, mixed black-Amerindian 3%, Amerindian 1%

Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%

Language in Colombia

The official language of Colombia is Spanish and spoken by around 43 million people. In addition there are approximately 500,000 speakers of American Indian languages.

Colombian Society & Culture

Catholicism

- * Most Colombians would consider themselves to be Roman Catholics.
- * The Church has historically been a very important influence over personal affairs such as marriage and family life.
- * The parish church is often seen as the centre of a community, with the local priest representing divine authority and leadership.
- * The church also has some influence in areas such as education, social welfare and union organization.

The Role of the Family

- * The family takes centre stage in the social structure.
- * It acts as a source of support and advice and therefore great loyalty is shown to families. Although extended families rarely live under one roof, apart from in rural areas, many are still live very close and frequent one another's houses often.
- * It is still common for children remain at home until they marry.
- * The elderly are generally revered for their age and experience.

Hierarchies

- * Colombia can be termed a hierarchical society.
- * People earn respect due to age and position.
- * Older people are naturally perceived as being wise and as a result are afforded great respect. You will always see the oldest person in a group served their food and drinks first.
- * With this position also comes responsibility - Colombians expect the most senior person, whether at home or at work, to make decisions.